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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, September 1, 1943

Subject: "RATIONING, ALTERNATES, AND GOOD DIET." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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As the old saying goes, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating. And the proof of the eating is what it does for the body in terms of energy, protein, fat, minerals and vitamins. Of course, no one food by itself supplies enough of each of these requirements for a well-rounded diet. It takes a combination of foods, and enough of each kind.

You get a little iron, let's say, from egg yolks. A little from liver. A little from a green leafy vegetable. A little from whole wheat bread. Altogether, in the course of a day's meals, you can get enough iron for the body's needs. You may also get other food values from the foods that supply the iron...vitamin A from the green leafy vegetable, egg yolks and liver, vitamin B-one from the whole wheat bread, and so on. If you have the important types of food represented in the "three squares", you are pretty sure to be giving your family a good diet.

The price you pay for the food you buy has little or nothing to do with its food value. Home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say you can have a poor diet though you buy expensive foods, and a good diet when you choose the right foods among the least expensive. And although you must take ration points into consideration, you may find that you have a good many choices, after all, if you know how to select "alternate" foods for those that are scarce. The trouble is that a lot of people haven't explored the good qualities of unfamiliar foods because they could always get the foods they liked. Some people, eating only the foods they like best, have cut themselves off from foods they really needed....like the people you all know who won't eat lettuce....or don't like butter...or milk....

or lamb....or something else.

Rationing is not the only problem in giving a family a good diet in wartime. A great many ordinary foods are not rationed, but for one reason or another they are not sold everywhere. Or they may be in your market today and not there next week. That's when you begin saying to yourself, "What can I get instead?"

Nutritionists group all foods according to their most important contribution to the body. In each food group several foods are interchangeable. Some supply several of the substances for which the group is important; some only one or two. And each type or group of food has an "alternate".... something you can use when you can't get your "number one" choice in that group.

To give you some idea what these alternates are, the home economists have listed all the main foods by groups, and with each one, suggested what you can use as an "alternate." You will notice how often you can use whole-grain or enriched cereals as alternates for scarce foods. Let's run briefly through the groups.

First, milk. That includes fluid, evaporated and dried milk, and foods like cheese and ice cream, made of milk. Milk is a "must" in any good diet. But in circumstances where the milk supply is short, your family will be well off temporarily with an alternate combination of whole-grain or enriched cereal, plus a leafy green vegetable, and eggs or soybeans products, or meat, fish or poultry. You will notice that it takes a combination of these three kinds of food to alternate for milk.

The next group is potatoes,...white or sweet. When you can't get either, your alternate is whole-grain or enriched cereals and an extra vegetable.

All the dried legumes,...dried peas, and beans of all kinds, lentils, soybeans, nuts, and peanut butter, make up another group. You can almost always get one or another of these foods, but if you need an alternate, turn again to

the whole-grain or enriched cereals, or buy potatoes and a meat, or eggs, fish, or poultry.

Now we come to a different group....citrus fruits and tomatoes. These foods are in a class by themselves, so important that it's hard to find good alternates. Other fruits like cantaloupe, or fresh or canned pineapple, and dark leafy salad greens, green peppers and raw cabbage, will span the off-season gaps in your supply of oranges, grapefruit, lemons, tangerines, or tomatoes. But don't neglect this group or its alternates. Serve one or more of these foods every day.

Green and yellow vegetables are also in a class by themselves. It takes an alternate combination of about four kinds of foods to substitute for greens, carrots, and other green and yellow vegetables. But if you have butter, or oleo-margarine with vitamin A added, and whole milk or yellow cheese, and potatoes, or beans in some form, and citrus fruit or tomatoes, you can get by for awhile without a green or a yellow vegetable.

For other vegetables and fruits you can alternate any vegetables and fruits from any group. It's all to the good if you serve more than one kind.

Eggs stand alone as an important type of food. Their alternates are the whole-grain or enriched cereals along with a green vegetable. Or as alternates for eggs use these cereals with milk and butter or milk and oleomargarine having vitamin A added.

Many families have always considered meat, poultry, and fish as a very important group of foods, and they are. But eggs and cheese with vegetables make a good alternate, or eggs and milk with whole-grain or enriched cereals or dry beans or peas. These are the foods to buy when your dealer is out of meat, poultry and fish. For example, have a cheese soufflé, and an extra vegetable or salad.

Cereals and flour are plentiful, and need no alternates. Fats and oils and sugars and sirups are energy foods, fairly abundant just now, and you can use one in place of the other, or grain products in place of either to supply you with calories.

So, with a wise use of alternate foods, you can really enjoy a good diet even in wartime.

